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DEVICE FOR MEASURING VISCOSITY AND/OR DENSITY

Background Information

The present invention relates to a device for measuring the density and/or the viscosity of a fluid according to the species defined in the main claim.

A sensor system and a method for ascertaining the density and the viscosity of a fluid are already known from DE 198 50 803, the use of at least one oscillating circuit being proposed.

Summary of the Invention

Compared to that, the device according to the present invention, having the features of the main claim, has the advantage that the possibility is created for compensating for effects which impair the result of the measurement.

Advantageous further developments and improvements of the device indicated in the main claim are rendered possible by the measures specified in the dependent claims.

It is especially advantageous that the first feedback network is provided as a feedback network having a resonator functioning as a sensor element, as the frequency-determining element, and that the second feedback network is provided as a feedback network having a correction capacitance as the frequency-determining element. It is possible thereby that, when measuring the viscosity of highly viscous liquids, a capacitance lying essentially

parallel to the detection impedance, for example, in the form of stray capacities, is able to be compensated for. Because of that it is achieved in an advantageous manner that a compensation is possible for the parallel-lying capacitance, without having to rely, for the compensation, on components having bad, i.e. large temperature coefficients or bad drift properties, such as, for instance, inductive components.

It is also of advantage that the device has an amplifier, that the amplifier has a first input, and that the first input of the amplifier has supplied to it an output of the first feedback network and an output of the second feedback network, the difference of the outputs of the feedback networks being supplied to the first input of the amplifier. This makes possible in a simple manner the compensation of the parallel-lying capacitances, in that the correction capacitance is selected to be approximately as great as the capacitances to be corrected and lying parallel.

Brief Description of the Drawings

An exemplary embodiment of the present invention is represented in the drawings, and explained in detail in the following description. The figures show:

Figure 1 a substitute circuit diagram of a quartz resonator in the vicinity of the resonant frequency,

Figure 2 a block diagram of the proposed oscillator circuit and

Figure 3 a schematic representation of a measuring system having a device according to the

present invention.

Description of the Exemplary Embodiment

5 It is generally known that one may use piezoelectric resonators, particularly thickness shear resonators, and in particular made of quartz, for measuring viscosity and or density. If such a thickness shear resonator is dipped into a viscous fluid, the resonant frequency of the natural
10 oscillation and its damping change as a function of the viscosity and the density of the liquid.

For the sake of simplicity, we first describe Figure 3. Figure 3 shows a schematic representation of a measuring
15 apparatus having a device according to the present invention. In a container 6 there is a fluid 5, especially a liquid 5, according to the present invention. The resonator denoted by reference numeral 3 is dipped into liquid 5 or fluid 5. Resonator 3 is connected to a
20 regulating and evaluation unit 4, which is in a position to pass on the measurement results with respect to the variables to be measured of liquid 5 via channels (not shown) that are wire-bound or not wire-bound. Resonator 3 and regulating and evaluation unit 4 together form the
25 device according to the present invention, that is denoted by reference numeral 7, for measuring the viscosity and/or density of a liquid. This is shown in Figure 3 by a combination of resonator 3 and regulating and evaluation unit 4, shown by a dotted line and provided with reference
30 numeral 7.

Figures 1 and 2 are now described below.

In this context, the substitute circuit diagram shown in
35 Figure 1 applies to a quartz resonator. This says that a

circuit symbol for the resonating system shown in the left part of Figure 1 and furnished with reference numeral 1, made up of resonator 3 and fluid 5 engaged with it, corresponds to a resonating system made up of a first part denoted by reference numeral 100 in Figure 1, which is also designated below as "dry portion", and a second part denoted by reference numeral 200, which is also designated below as "liquid portion" or "fluid portion".

Dry portion 100 and fluid portion 200 are shown in Figure 1 as being connected in the sense of a series connection, and are arranged in the right part of Figure 1 one behind the other. Dry portion 100 in this case includes a resonator 3, whose behavior may be described by a first capacitance C_1 , a first inductance L_1 and a first resistor R_1 . Fluid portion 200 includes, in this case, the fluid layer bordering on resonator 3 or the portion of the fluid which is influenced by the mechanical vibrations of the resonator. The behavior of the fluid layer engaged with resonator 3 or of the portion of the fluid engaged with resonator 3 may be described, in this context, by a second inductance L_2 and a second resistor R_2 .

Second resistor R_2 is approximately proportional to the square root of the product of the density and the dynamic viscosity of the fluid or liquid. Second resistor R_2 represents the viscous damping by the liquid. Second inductance L_2 brings about a frequency shift by the viscous liquid, second inductance L_2 , at rough resonator surfaces, also including portions that are created by liquid portions "trapped" in the rough resonator surface. This frequency shift is also approximately proportional to the square root of the product of the density and the dynamic viscosity of the fluid or liquid. At a known, or sufficiently constant density, the resonator may therefore be used to determine

the (dynamic) viscosity. According to the present invention, for evaluation or for measurement it is provided that one should record the electrical parameters used by using the resonator as frequency-determining element in an oscillator circuit, or rather by it.

In the characterization of highly viscous liquids, second resistor R_2 rises greatly, so that the impedance of the resonator is also determined in the vicinity of the series resonant frequency essentially by a capacitance that is present in parallel to the serial arrangement made up of first capacitance C_1 , first inductance L_1 , first resistor R_1 , second inductance L_2 and second resistor R_2 and that is designated by reference numeral C_0 . This capacitance C_0 represents the electrostatic capacitance which is manifested by the electrodes applied to the resonator for the excitation of the oscillation. Additional stray capacitances, which are not shown in Figure 1 for simplicity's sake, and which also lie parallel to capacitance C_0 , may also be present. The stray capacitances represent, for example, those capacitances which are manifested by the supply lines to the sensor element.

In response to high resistance values of second resistor R_2 , that is, at high viscosities of the liquid, the overall impedance of the resonator is also determined in the vicinity of the series resonant frequency, essentially by capacitance C_0 (or rather, with the addition of the stray capacitances), whereby the determination of the relevant substitute parameters using an oscillator circuit becomes more difficult.

A possible remedy is the parallel connection of an inductance for compensating capacitance C_0 , or rather, with the addition of the stray capacitances, in the vicinity of

the series resonant frequency of the resonator. The disadvantage of this is, on the one hand, the required adjustment of this additional (compensating) inductance and, on the other hand, the usually bad temperature coefficients or drift properties of inductive component parts.

According to the present invention, an oscillator circuit is provided in which the interfering influence of capacitance C_0 is suppressed by the use of a reference capacitance C , which is also denoted below as correction capacitance C . In the simplest case, this reference capacitance C should have approximately the value of capacitance C_0 . What is advantageous, according to the present invention, is the possibility of compensation of capacitance C_0 without the need for an inductance to be adjusted, and accordingly of the dropping out of all the disadvantages connected with that.

Figure 2 shows a block diagram of an oscillator circuit 2 according to the present invention. Oscillator circuit 2 has an amplifier V , a first feedback network K_1 , a second feedback network K_2 and an amplification regulating unit AGC. Amplifier V has a first input 10, a second input 11 and an output 12. The first feedback network K_1 has an input 21 and an output 22. The second feedback network K_2 has an input 31 and an output 32. The amplification regulating unit AGC has an input 41 and an output 42. Output 12 of amplifier V is connected to both input 21 of first feedback network K_1 and to input 31 of second feedback network K_2 and to input 41 of amplification regulating unit AGC. The output of first feedback network K_1 is connected to first input 10 of the amplifier. The output of second feedback network K_2 is also connected to first input 10 of the amplifier. According to the present invention, it is provided in particular that output 32 of second feedback network K_2 is connected to

first input 10 of amplifier V in such a way that output 32 of second feedback network K_2 works negatively on first input 10 of amplifier V in such a way that the difference of outputs 22, 32 of first and second feedback networks K_1 , K_2 is present at first input 10 of amplifier V. This is shown in Figure 2 by designating output 32 of second feedback network K_2 with a minus sign (-), in the vicinity of the joining together the signals of outputs 22, 32 of feedback networks K_1 , K_2 .

The crux of oscillator circuit 2 is amplifier V and feedback network K_1 , which includes the resonator, furnished in Figure 2 with reference symbol Q, as the frequency-determining element. Resonator Q, according to the present invention, is provided especially as quartz, and is indeed designated below as quartz Q. The transmission coefficient of feedback network K_1 is typically of such a nature that, in the vicinity of the series resonant frequency of quartz Q, its absolute value is a maximum. At the same time, in the vicinity of this point, advantageously the phase condition for the oscillation should be satisfied, i.e. it should be true that the sum of the phases of first feedback network K_1 and amplifier V is a multiple of 360° . The last-mentioned conditions may be fulfilled by the appropriate design of the circuit blocks of first feedback network K_1 , second feedback network K_2 and amplifier V.

The oscillation takes place at a frequency of ω , at which the oscillating condition is satisfied; in the case of the system shown in Figure 2 this means that the product of the transmission coefficient of amplifier V, multiplied by the difference that results from transmission coefficient of first feedback network K_1 reduced by the transmission coefficient of second feedback network K_2 , has to be exactly 1. The transmission coefficients of the functional blocks of

oscillator circuit 2 should be viewed, in this case, as transmission coefficients of a complex variable, and therefore these oscillating conditions may be split up into an amplitude condition and a phase condition.

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Because of amplification regulating unit AGC, the amplitude condition may be satisfied at the oscillating frequency specified by the phase condition. Amplification regulating unit AGC especially includes, for example, a functional block, not shown in Figure 2 for simplicity's sake, for recording the amplitude of oscillation of a first output signal of oscillator circuit 2 shown in Figure 2 as having reference symbol FS, which, according to the present invention, corresponds particularly to the output signal of amplifier V. This functional block in amplification regulating unit AGC for recording the amplitude of oscillation is in particular designed as a rectifier circuit. In addition, amplification regulating unit AGC may especially include, for example, a controller, not shown in Figure 2 for simplicity's sake, which, via output 42 of amplification regulating unit AGC, sets the amplification in amplifier V in such a way that a constant oscillating amplitude comes about. A second output signal of oscillator circuit 2 shown in Figure 2 by reference symbol VS corresponds to output 42 of amplification regulating unit AGC.

According to the present invention, in response to the regulation by the oscillating circuit, it is the aim to bring about an oscillation at the series resonant frequency determined by the impedance to be measured, the impedance to be measured being given by the series circuit, shown in Figure 1, made up of first inductance L_1 , first capacitance C_1 , first resistor R_1 , second inductance L_2 and second resistor R_2 . The oscillator frequency, which is essentially

determined, after compensation, has taken place, by inductances L_1 and L_2 and first capacitance C_1 , and for which the first output signal FS is a measure, may then be used to determine second inductance L_2 . Since second resistor R_2 ,
5 which is designated below also as loss resistor R_2 , determines the damping of first feedback network K_1 , it may be determined directly by the second output signal VS of the oscillating circuit, which is necessary for bringing about the oscillation, determines the amplification, and is
10 denoted below also as amplification signal VS. Since both quantities, first inductance L_2 and second resistor R_2 , are determined by the product of (dynamic) viscosity and density of the fluid, output signals FS and VS may be drawn upon for the determination of these liquid properties.

15 Without the presence of second feedback network K_2 , the frequency-determining phase condition would, however, be considerably influenced by capacitance C_0 , which is denoted below also as static capacitance C_0 . This is true especially
20 at large loss resistors R_2 , which make the series resonant branch highly resistive. Consequently, at the total impedance of the oscillating system, static capacitance C_0 leads to a phase shift in the frequency response of first feedback network K_1 , whereby the oscillating frequency moves
25 away from the desired series resonant frequency or, in the extreme case, is interrupted. Upon deviation from the series resonant frequency, one is no longer able, without error, to infer the loss resistance R_2 from second output signal VS, which is supplied by amplification regulating unit AGC.
30 To be sure, static capacitance C_0 could be compensated by a parallel inductance; however, this would involve severe disadvantages, such as:

- inductances are difficult to tune, and are able to be
35 manufactured only under large manufacturing tolerances;

- inductance values of coils drift, and have temperature dependencies;
- the compensation takes place only at parallel resonant frequencies, given by static capacitance C_0 and the inductance that is connected in parallel.

The compensation method, according to the present invention, of static capacitance C_0 (and possibly present parallel stray capacitances present parallel thereto) is based on the assumption that first feedback network K_1 has a transmission coefficient which is at least approximately proportional to the inverse of the impedance of quartz Q . In this case, the proportion of static capacitance C_0 may be compensated by second feedback network K_2 that is situated parallel to first feedback network K_1 , in that the output signals of first feedback network K_1 and of second feedback network K_2 are subtracted, as shown in Figure 2. If feedback networks K_1 , K_2 are chosen to be identical, then, for a complete compensation of static capacitance C_0 , correction capacitance C has to be set to the value of static capacitance C_0 . The functionality of second feedback network K_2 is comparable to that of first feedback network K_1 inasmuch as second feedback network K_2 also has a transmission coefficient which is essentially proportional to the inverse of an impedance, namely the impedance of correction capacitance C .

Instead of the exact adjustment of correction capacitance C to the value required for the optimum compensation, the compensation may advantageously also take place by the variation of other parameters which influence the transmission coefficient of second feedback network K_2 , such as amplification factors.

One advantageous circuit technology execution of the

oscillating circuit according to the present invention or of device 7 according to the present invention, uses with respect to ground, i.e. the reference potential of the oscillating circuit, which for simplicity's sake is not shown in Figure 2, symmetrical signals, whereby the subtraction of output signals 22, 32 of feedback networks K_1 , K_2 is able to take place by "crossing out" the signal lines. The execution of outputs 22, 32 of feedback networks K_1 , K_2 in the form of so-called current outputs [what exactly does that mean?] may in addition make possible a simple execution of the addition node, which is shown in Figure 2 by a plus sign (+) in a circle, at the coming together of outputs 22, 32 of feedback networks K_1 , K_2 to input 10 of the amplifier. Just such a design of outputs 22, 32 in the form of current outputs makes it alternatively also possible to carry out the subtraction, according to the present invention, of the output signal of second feedback network K_2 from the output signal of first feedback network K_1 , using a subtraction node (not shown) instead of the addition node.